

Now more than ever, Americans treasure our religious freedom, which embraces the many diverse communities of faith that have infused our society and our cultural heritage through more than two centuries. Millions of Americans gratefully sustain the tradition of prayer in churches, synagogues, temples, mosques, and other houses of worship across our country.

And we continue to rely on our faith as a pillar of strength, even in this era of unprecedented peace and prosperity. We pray for the spirit of reconciliation, so that we may overcome the divisions of race, religion, culture, and background that have scarred our society in recent years. We pray for the spirit of compassion so that we will reach out to others who have not shared equally in this world's bounteous blessings—those here at home who struggle for economic and educational opportunity and those around the globe whose lives have been darkened by the shadows of poverty, oppression, natural disaster, or disease. And we must always pray for wisdom—the wisdom to raise children with strong values and loving hearts; the wisdom to live in harmony with our environment and to preserve its health and beauty for the benefit of future generations; and the wisdom to keep America the world's greatest hope for freedom, peace, and human dignity in the 21st century.

The Congress, by Public Law 100–307, has called on our citizens to reaffirm the role of prayer in our society and to honor the religious diversity our freedom permits by recognizing annually a “National Day of Prayer.”

**Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton,** President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 4, 2000, as a National Day of Prayer. I encourage the citizens of this great Nation to pray, each in his or her own manner, seeking strength from God to face today's challenges, seeking guidance for tomorrow's uncertainties, and giving thanks for the rich blessings that our country has enjoyed throughout its history.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this fourth day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

**William J. Clinton**

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## **Memorandum on Additional Guidelines for Charter Schools**

*May 4, 2000*

*Memorandum for the Secretary of Education*

*Subject: Additional Guidelines for Charter Schools*

My Administration has taken landmark steps to help State and localities improve educational opportunities for students by providing much needed resources to reduce class size, improve teacher quality, and expand summer school and after-school programs. Last year, for the first time ever, the Federal Government provided funds to States and localities specifically to intervene and assist low-performing schools. This year, our School Improvement Fund will provide \$134 million to States and localities to help them turn around low-performing schools. In addition, through the 1994 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and Goals 2000, States have developed standards and accountability systems to identify schools that are low performing. Already, we are seeing results from this focus on standards-based reform and greater investment, including a rise in test scores among our most disadvantaged students. Nonetheless, much work remains to be done. In too many communities, predominately low-income communities, there is still a shortage of high-quality educational opportunities available to students.

One of the most heartening educational developments during my Administration is the extraordinary growth of public charter schools. In 1992, just before I took office, there was only one charter school in the country, City Academy in St. Paul, Minnesota. Since then, because of strong leadership at the local, State, and Federal level, the number of charter schools has exploded and it is now estimated that there are more than 1,700 charter schools nationwide. The Federal Government has invested almost \$400 million in charter schools since 1994,

and advocates of charter schools credit this investment for the remarkable growth of charter schools. The Budget that I sent to the Congress this year will provide \$175 million for charter schools in FY 2001. By next year, the charter school program will have helped nearly 2,400 charter schools since its inception, supporting my Administration's goal of creating 3,000 public charter schools by 2002.

Charter schools are a vital engine of school reform because they promote accountability for results, competition, and choice within the public school system. Unlike vouchers, which do nothing to increase the number of high-quality educational options for students in a community, charter schools allow local community groups, teachers, or parents to open public schools that meet their needs. And, unlike vouchers, charter schools do not drain taxpayer dollars from the public school system and are accountable to the public for results. Because charter schools are truly community-based schools created by local communities to address their own particular needs, it is essential that all institutions in a community understand how they can play a role with regard to charter schools. Every entity that can play a positive role in school reform needs to be engaged in ensuring that children and parents have high-quality public schools and choices among those public schools.

Among the community institutions that can provide important support for the goals of charter schools are local faith-based and business institutions. Both have resources that can support the efforts of charter schools to create high-quality, innovative learning environments that serve all children and help them to meet high standards.

Faith-based and community-based organizations play an important role in feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, and educating our children in communities around this Nation. Already many faith- and community-based organizations partner with government at the Federal, State, and local level to help our Nation's families. Under my Administration, faith-based organizations have also become eligible to receive Federal funds in an array of social programs on the same basis as other community-based organizations, consistent

with the constitutional line between church and state. For example, States can use their welfare reform funds to contract with faith-based organizations on the same basis as other nongovernment providers to provide services such as job preparation, mentoring, childcare, and other services to help families moving from welfare to work. The 1998 Human Services reauthorization similarly allows faith-based organizations to provide services under the Community Services Block Grant to reduce poverty, revitalize low-income communities, and help low-income families become self-sufficient.

Vice President Gore and I support such efforts and believe we can do even more to increase the valuable partnership role religiously affiliated and community-based organizations can play in addressing some of the most important issues facing our families and communities. My Administration has proposed to increase the involvement of such organizations in education, housing, community-development, criminal and juvenile-justice programs, in breaking the cycle of teen pregnancy, promoting responsible fatherhood, and helping families move from welfare to work. To help support these worthy causes, my Budget will provide tax breaks to encourage all Americans to give to charity.

Schools and faith communities should be reaching out to each other, in ways consistent with the Constitution, to support their common goals for children and families. There are successful partnerships between public schools and faith communities across the Nation in after-school programs, school safety, discipline, and student literacy. These range from mentoring programs jointly run by schools and interfaith groups to statewide summits on the role of faith-based groups in college preparation. In 1995, we sent every school district in the country the guidebook *Religion in the Public Schools: A Statement of Principles*. Last December, building on those principles, I announced a comprehensive set of guidelines to be mailed to every public school in the Nation and to leading religious organizations encouraging greater cooperation, within constitutional limits, between public schools and community groups, including faith-based organizations. The guidelines emphasized both the protection of

private religious expression in schools and the prohibitions against coerced student participation in religious expression. These guidelines were the culmination of my Administration's 4-year effort to forge consensus on the role of religion in the schools.

Likewise, business institutions have proven themselves to be valuable partners in helping schools and school districts better prepare students to develop the skills and knowledge they need to be part of the 21st century workforce. Over the last 2 decades, businesses have played a leadership role at the local, State, and national levels in supporting the need for school reform and advancing the standards-based movement. Although school-business partnership can be little more than a donation, there are many examples across the country of businesses that are working actively with schools to help improve the quality of public education. In these partnerships, businesses are working to help bolster school curricula, train teachers, implement technology effectively, offer mentors and tutors to students, and provide lessons in management and leadership. If this Nation's public schools are to offer the kind of high-quality education that prepares students for the world of work and active citizenship, then businesses must play a key role in this process.

Businesses have much to offer the charter movement. Because charter schools are exempt from many regulations governing traditional public schools, they have more freedom to develop innovative educational programs and to partner with business institutions in creative ways. Currently, there are over 100 employer-linked charter schools in operation across the country. These schools vary from those offering very focused career preparation, to those that incorporate modest exposure to jobs, careers, and employers. What they share in common are innovative environments that offer work-based and career-focused educational experiences for students from a wide variety of backgrounds.

But I believe that businesses can do more to work with charter schools to develop stimulating educational environments that prepare our students for the challenges of the workforce in the 21st century. I especially believe that employer-linked charter schools

offer a new range of possibilities for those students who are not finding success in our more traditional public schools.

Accordingly, because there is still a great deal of confusion about how different entities can be involved in the charter movement, I direct you to work together with the Department of Justice to develop guidelines to be released prior to the 2000–2001 school year to help faith-based and other community-based and business institutions understand the role they can play in the charter school movement. Public charter schools must be nonsectarian and nondiscriminatory in their admissions and practices. In addition, as with other public schools, a charter school should not offer opportunities for the commercial exploitation of its students and/or its mission. However, there are numerous ways that faith-based groups and employers can play a positive role in creating and supporting public charter schools, just as other community organizations do. These guidelines would augment the existing guidelines for public charter schools and the guidelines for religious expression in public schools that I released in December.

Increasing the quality of education in this country for disadvantaged students is a national priority but requires the active involvement of every affected community. In economically distressed communities, faith-based organizations and business partners can play critically important roles in providing needed support services and job-focused experiences for students who too often lack either. Ensuring that faith-based and business institutions can play a vigorous role in expanding educational opportunities while respecting the separation of church and state and the limitations on commercial involvement in schools is an important step to providing high-quality educational experiences for all children.

**William J. Clinton**

### **Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori of Japan**

*May 5, 2000*

**The President.** Good morning.